**“Massachusetts Bay Company”** by Oscar Zeichner (*Scholastic)*

The Massachusetts Bay Company was a joint stock trading company chartered by the English crown in 1629 to colonize a vast area in New England extending from 3 mi (4.8 km) miles north of the Merrimack River to 3 mi miles south of the Charles River. It was quickly taken over by a group of Puritans, under the leadership of John Winthrop, who wished to establish a religious community in the New World. The first colonists sailed from England in 1630 and established the Massachusetts Bay Colony, with its center at Boston. They were soon joined by other settlers, almost all Puritans; by 1640, 20,000 of them had settled in Boston and neighboring towns, and the colony was a thriving success.

The Puritan leaders had carried the company's charter with them to New England; this action enabled them to govern themselves and meant that they would not be controlled by governors and stockholders in England. Bending the charter to their own purposes, the Puritans transformed the company into a religious commonwealth. Their ambition had been to establish an ideal Christian community a "city on a hill," as Winthrop called it with the eyes of England and the entire world on it. Winthrop was reelected governor, and a theocracy was in fact established. In May 1631 the Puritan leaders agreed to recognize only church members as freemen (those entitled to vote and hold office). The company's officers became the colony's magistrates. The ministers of the church defined orthodoxy, and the colony's magistrates enforced it. Dissenters were suppressed or banished.

Early challenges to the charter were averted by the outbreak of the English Civil War in the 1640s; for about 50 years, with little interference from England, the Massachusetts Bay Colony developed into a Puritan commonwealth. In 1684, however, the government of Charles II revoked the company's charter. The colony was merged briefly into the extensive but short-lived (168688) Dominion of New England, which included New Hampshire and New Jersey and the colonies lying between them. With Plymouth and Maine, the colony became part of a unified royal colony of Massachusetts in 1691; the religious laws instituted by the Massachusetts Bay Company were largely repealed.

**Central Idea of the Article** (In your own words):

**Supporting Detail/Big Idea #1 (Paragraph 1)**

**Supporting Detail/Big Idea #2 (Paragraph 1)**

**Supporting Detail/Big Idea #3 (Paragraph 3)**